SOLID MISH-MASH

A contribution to ApaTech 49 by Roxanne Meida Shields of 4309 Drowfield Dr., Trotwood, OH 45426 (513) 837-4165 At least that's where I live right now.

(NOTE: I wrote the following for Issue 48, but it didn't get mailed.)

It's January and I Haven't Needed a Snow Shovel Yet

Well, I saw a lot of you at Isher so much of this will be rehash, but so what. Read it anyway.

1986 was a Real Good Year for Scott and me. I doubt we'll have another as good soon, maybe not ever. We each got new, paying-real-money jobs, we got two new cars, a new place to live, took a great vacation (see Issue 44), acquired miscellaneous other "Yuppie" gizmos, and even managed to save a little money. (Now for a chorus of "Lord, it's hard to be humble...")

On the downside, two great-uncles and a great-aunt died. For two out of three it was more a relief, but the third was only 66 and he wasn't supposed to die quite yet. Oh, well.

Scott has been "supposed to" go to Mexico approximately every week since mid-October. So far he has actually gone once for six days. He was supposed to go last Monday (Jan 12) and next Monday (Jan 19) but both have been postponed and now he's supposed to go on Jan 26. I'll believe it when I see it. He has also been on the job for one year now, and has missed his 30-day, 90-day, 6-month and 1-year job/salary reviews. This can't reflect well on his boss, but there's nothing we can do about it.

My job is going middling all right. I have interpersonal problems with my boss, but am trying to work around them. The big projects we have been working lots of overtime on have just about wound down. It will be hard learning to live on a normal paycheck again.

We went to Isher, arriving just after midnight on Friday night/Saturday morning. It takes about five and a half hours to drive to Kalamazoo from here. Although the distance is quite a bit shorter, it's about the same as to Chicago. This is because there is no direct freeway from here to Kazoo. We have to wind our way on US 30 around Fort Wayne between I-75 and I-69. As US 30 is a normal four-lane road around Fort Wayne, it slows us down. However, it does give us a good halfway point to eat at.

It seemed I spent most of the time at Isher discussing the having/raising/etc. of babies/small children with just about everyone. Between having my sister here for a few days, visiting Scott's parents (with Scott's sister and her brood there too) and Isher, I have been around a lot of little kids and I discovered some new things about child raising and as usual I will talk about them here. Feel free to tell me all the places I'm wrong (I know you will). Fortunately or not, all the children I saw were girls, ranging in age from 9 months to five years. I will therefore refer to the child in the female, as that's what they were.

1. It is good to have grandparents in close proximity if you have children. Parents who know they can leave the child in good hands on short notice tend to be more relaxed. They are not as likely to abandon the child on anyone who looks like s/he might babysit for a while, just to be away from them.

2. The shorter the child's leash, the more enjoyable she is to be around. That is, the closer the parent's attention to the child, whether obvious or not, the less the child will misbehave, and the less,as the observer, I will wonder whether or not to discipline the child myself. I had one parent tell me not to discipline the child, and two others tell me to go ahead. One even added that the child might respond to me better, as I was not the parent. The implication seemed (to me) to be that both the parent and the child knew who ruled their relationship, and only another might be able to rule the child.

3. Changing diapers isn't that bad, provided the child isn't sick.

4. A sick child is the pits.

5. It is possible to read to 9 month olds.

6. Tiny babies don't stay that way long, and when they aren't tiny at first, they REALLY don't stay that way long. (Lori's baby at 9 months old weighed 18+ pounds, was 30 inches tall, and was more the size of a 18 month. This is my "baby" niece?!)

7. Kids are not easily broken, despite internal adult emotions to the contrary. If a kid falls, an adult will usually react worse than the kid, and this is bad. For example: Kid falls down. Adult rushes over, picks up child, asks if child is okay. Fine. What does kid learn? Falling over (a) gets attention from adult; (b) causes a big commotion; and (c) doesn't hurt much. Conclusion: Falling down is a great way to get attention! Problem: Those adults stop paying attention when child falls, and soon don't notice when the child really is hurt. Solution: Don't pay attention to a child falling, unless s/he starts crying or acting dazed first.

8. People over 18 who do not have children make inconsistent baby-sitters.

9. Parents who have more than one child do better. I think this is because they just don't have time to put up with the bullshit one child can produce. A single child will get dinner even after he dumps his on the floor; a child in a family will learn that dumping the dish means no food for him. Plus he isn't used to all the toys being "his."

Okay, how does this integrate practically into children at GT events, you ask? Rules need to be created. Rules I would suggest or second include:

A. No unaccompanied children anywhere, at any time. Such children, and their parents, should be summarily ejected from that event.

B. No unpaid babysitting. I got $2 an hour ten years ago; my rates have since gone up. Paid babysitting only by contract.

C. Only parents change diapers on their own children. If the child is currently in the midst of potty-training, put diapers on him/her for the

duration, or leave them at Grandma's.

D. Only parents feed their own children.

E. Establish child-safe zones and child-prohibited zones.

F. Sleep-over children sleep with their own parents. Possibly in the same sleeping bag, if space is that short.

G. Computers must be in the child-prohibited area.

H. Parents will pay full restitution for any damage the child does, even if it means buying a new 512K Mac with 30 Meg hard drive to replace the one trashed. Or paying to clean the rug the child urinated on. Or to replace the curtains Junior sliced with the scissors. Ad infinitum.

Different GT events will of course have different parameters. At HamFest, I am expecting three child-prohibited areas: the kitchen, the computer room, and my bedroom. There will be one child-safe area: the dining room. Gray areas are the living room, bathroom and the second bedroom. Children must go with their parents to the HamFest. I WILL NOT tolerate children left here without their parents. The potential problems are mind-boggling. Adults will be asked to be circumspect and not leave many small items (especially IC's, etc.) around. Nevertheless, the child will be to blame should he ingest such an object.

Well known anecdote: I saw my first X-ray at age 5 after my sister, age 2, put an open safety pin [the little gold kind] in her mouth, and breathed in while my mom tried to remove it. The pin came from a dress tag my mom had removed from her dress moments before and put on a table supposedly out of Lori's reach. Lori had to be taken to the hospital, where a tube was inserted into her lungs (carefully, so as not to move the pin to a position to puncture the lung) and then very tiny forceps on a long shaft were inserted inside the tube to remove the pin. I do not want any visitors to go through what my parents did, nor any children to go through what my sister did. In analyzing this incident, we have long established that this was Lori's fault. I will take that view in any such incident.

Hamfest 1987

Hamfest is only ~~five~~ three months away and many of you are making your travel plans for next year already. I want to explain a few things and let you know what's going on from our end.

First, last year's Hamfest went real well. Everyone had a good time, and it wasn't too crowded. Therefore, we are doing a few things to ensure this happens again. In the interest of having as few hurt feelings as possible, I want to explain everything publicly.

1. Our house is a fairly nice three bedroom ranch. It has an attached one car garage and no basement. We feel that sixteen people is the maximum it can sleep comfortably. It will be worse if the weather isn't nice.

2. Every hotel within a fifty mile radius has been booked solid for Hamfest since August. I know because I checked. Therefore:

3. We are making staying overnight at Hamfest an Invitation Only party. If more than we invite show up, we have nowhere for them to stay AT ALL. While it would be nice to make up a list of only those HamFesters that both Scott and I like, we aren't doing that. We are inviting everyone who came last year, plus Bob and Connie, Barry because he was notably missing, Donna and Tullio who we'd like to see and who'd like to come, Valli and Joa if they're still around, because they are Real Bonafide Hams, who would come for the HamFest and not just to socialize.

That's It. If previous attendees tell me in time that they can't come, I will invite additional people to take their place(s). Please do not take it upon yourselves to invite people that you "know would like to come." Lots of people would like to come, but unfortunately we don't have lots of room.

Note: For those who know the gory details of our problems, Scott has agreed to host HamFest no matter how well we happen to be getting along by then.

Now that that's over with, I can get on with the rest of the zine.

NEW STUFF FOR ISSUE #49

The past four weeks have been very enjoyable, and quite confusing. Scott went to Texas/Mexico as planned on January 26. I hardly noticed he was gone the first few days. The first weekend, I went up to Chicago, stayed with Mike and Alice, and did quite a bit of genealogy research at the Newberry Library. (The Newberry is one of THE places to go, along with the LDS library in Salt Lake City, for genealogical research.)

The next weekend, I was feeling even more lonesome, so I went up to see Donna and the folks in Kalamazoo. Marty had a party for Chinese New Year, and Mike and Alice also came, so again it was a great time. Unfortunately, I committed a Major Indiscretion, and that will haunt us for quite a while.

The following weekend, Inland paid for me to go down to Texas to see Scott. It was very nice to leave 25° weather here and arrive in 80+° weather there. We sat in the hotel's jacuzzi, swam, went to the beach on South Padre Island, went shopping in Matamoros, Mexico, and generally had a great time.

In Matamoros, the "subdivisions" look like the slums you see on PBS specials on the third world. The incongruous part is that in Matamoros you will see a (to my eyes) broken down shack built of 2 x 4's with a goat tied to the porch, with a 1986 car outside and the children dressed in designer jeans. It takes a long while to stop putting my (Northern Midwest) values on their housing. Logically, there is absolutely no reason to build a sturdier house. The weather is always pretty warm (It was 86° on February 14) and, since the power supply in Matamoros leaves a lot to be desired, the average person can't build a well-insulated house and assume he can air-condition it. The plywood and cinder-block "shacks" actually make a lot of sense, in context. But it's hard to get used to.

The thing that could be helped is the smell. There is no sewage treatment, and every ditch is a potential open sewer. Scott says that even in the Inland plant there is a wastebasket in every stall, because the sewer system cannot handle paper (think about it...). I think the government of Mexico

should require that American companies who go there to build sewage treatment plants. This would help the companies as much as Mexico, and the companies could get great PR out of it. I expect it breaks down when we start asking who would control the operation of the plants. Oh, well.

Because of the exchange rate (1,015 pesos to the dollar), I was able to buy yarn there for about 1/3 the cost of the same yarn in Dayton. I didn't have any patterns with me, so I just bought tons of it and figured I would find something to make from it. I had a lot of fun buying it, too, because the man there spoke some English and I spoke some Spanish (I know my numbers and "dame" [give me] but not my colors).

The Mexican economy has nose-dived in the past ten years. When I took Spanish in high school, we learned that the peso was worth about a nickel. It is now worth about 1/10 of a cent, or about 1/50 of its value in 1977. Imagine a dollar worth 2 cents, or a twenty dollar bill to buy a newspaper. That's what the exchange rate has done in Mexico. True Mexican inflation hasn't been nearly as bad. You can get a $1.50 hamburger for around 500 pesos. That's why American companies can cross the border and get labor for cents an hour. They pay a very good Mexican wage, say 600 pesos an hour, (which in 1977 would have been $30/hour) which today translates to only 60 cents/hour.

South Padre Island (Texas) is a great place to go for a vacation. The sand is about the color and consistency of sugar. The Gulf is pretty warm even in February. It makes an ideal Spring Break location. The island is about a half mile off the mainland, and 90% of the locals live on the mainland, so you could party long and loud and not bother anybody. The primary buildings on the island are hotels and (good) restaurant/bars. Plan on eating lots of seafood if you go there. Their idea of what to do with a steak leaves a lot to be desired (I MAYBE put that much pepper in my chili).

On the movie front, I finally got to see "Mannequin" which stars the only star (Andrew McCarthy) whom I have gotten drooly over (well, since Bobby Sherman when I was ten, anyway). It was very satisfying for the Movie Fan in me, but quite disconcerting because A.M.'s character's former girlfriend happened to be named Roxie Shield. I should at least get to meet him for that, shouldn't I?

Mailing comments on issue 46:

Cover: Haven't I seen this somewhere before? 555 Times: Goodbye, Deadwood.

At Home on the Range: Gas or electric? Your mention of GreenPeace got me thinking (always a bad sign). At a younger age I was militantly opposed to the killing of any such hunted animal, including deer, moose, elk, rabbits (bunnies!), you name it. Having spent numerous years in the next-door-to-wilderness of Upper Michigan, I am now much more cynical (?) about the whole thing. In Michigan, there is 1 deer for every four humans. There are several moose, hundreds of elk and possibly millions of rabbits. Every year thousands of these animals are killed by non-hunters behaving stupidly, combined with stupid animal behavior. (Worst are the back-to-nature-ites on ATV's.) I feel much better about organized, monitored harvesting of these animals to help keep humans and the rest of the animal species from starvation. And GreenPeace has no more right to sink a foreign

ship because it doesn't like what it's doing than an Iranian has to blow up an embassy because they don't like what they're doing. When GreenPeace merely harrassed the whalers, it was one thing, but when they attack violently, they become hypocrites and lose my support entirely. It's the same contrast as picketing quietly vs. bombing abortion clinics.

Re yr ct Bill-El: Maybe I'm glad I can't eat yogurt. Re Rug Rats: My family seems to solve that by just not having boys. (4 nieces, 0 nephews.) When I was young, they explained very clearly what happened to girls every month. That was fine, until about four years later when I found out that boys had NOTHING AT ALL, EVER. Saying I was outraged is to completely underestimate the emotion involved.

Amorphous Abstractions--Finally! A zine title which describes the article! //Sign us up for the GT/PFRC campout. We'll be at McLain and/or Fort Wilkins (maybe the Porkies, who knows?) the week before. But leave the current incarnation of PFRC out of it, OK?//Isn't it a shame that they never let you read the really good stuff?

Letter From Easton--Very interesting, but there's no way I can answer any of those questions responsibly (ok, so that has rarely stopped me before, but it has this time).

Transporter Topics--Good luck on the novel! I've always wanted to read a book by someone I knew before he was a published novelist.//Re new cartoons: Why aren't you sleeping on Saturday mornings?

Invisible Starship--I know why you can't find any women; you're never in one place long enough!//Thanks for the review of what really happened at Chernobyl. My initial reading evoked comments of "Gack!" and "I'm glad I wasn't there!" Also, an extra 3000 cancer deaths is an interesting number. Do they mean in Russia, world wide, or within a hundred mile radius?!//

What college is Bexley Hall at? How many people live(d) in it? Was the cat a resident, or a commuting member?//On TV the other day, while channel changing so I'm not sure what news program it was on, someone stated authoritatively that 85% of "Yuppie" executives feel they were never part of a group in high school.

This Side of Eden (Twolleo?)--I agree completely on the subject of autographs.//Otherwise, RAEBNC.

Again MMC--It is beginning to appear from my limited Christmas/Isher observations that the kid on the short leash is the kid that's nice to be around. The kid who gets what s/he wants is just insufferable, and non-parents are ready to strangle him/her within just a couple of hours. The kid who can play his/her parents against each other ("Daddy said I could... Mommy lets me...") is the child of careless parents. Moral of the story: Parents exist to keep children from doing/getting what they want. Moral #2: Being a parent often is not fun, because YOU have to be cop, judge, jury and warden. And no time off for good behavior. Moral #3: Dad and Mom have to agree on rules and punishment. I know I could produce a child, but whether I could be a (good) parent, and especially a good part of a good parenting team, is another question.